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NURSING EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND, 1883 TO 1930:
THE PERSISTENCE OF THE NIGHTINGALE ETHOS

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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JAN. A. RODGERS

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ABSTRACT

NURSING EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND, 1883 to 1930: THE PERSISTENCE OF THE NIGHTINGALE ETHOS

This thesis argues that the Nightingale ethos shaped the development and progress of nursing training in New Zealand during the years 1883 to 1930. The Nightingale ethos with its allegiance to the traditional belief in women's responsibility for nurturance, cleanliness and order, along with the truly 'feminine' traits of forbearance, endurance and obedience, paralleled the idealised vision of woman, mother and 'helpmeet'. That Florence Nightingale saw nursing as a natural extension of the role of female both advantaged and hindered nurse training. From a period of amateurism when every woman was a nurse, there developed a belief that nursing was women's work, an acceptable occupation for females. This same belief was used by administrators to provide an economically stringent hospital service, with the nursing service situated in hospitals, probationers providing the service while receiving a training. It is my contention that the Nightingale ethos was incompatible with advanced training for nurses. Even when nurse training was provided with the opportunity for a new direction - a university education - the pervasiveness of the Nightingale ethos prevented this. The training scheme for nurses remained within the hospital structure perpetuating the unwritten, unformulated belief that nurses' work was women's work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Army Division (Army Division File National Archives)
A.J.H.R.	Appendices to the House of Representatives
A.T.L.	Alexander Turnbull Library
c.	Circa
H	Health (Health File, National Archives)
H.D.F.	Health Department File, Department of Health, Head Office, Wellington
K.T.	Kai Tiaki (New Zealand Nursing Journal)
N.A.	National Archives
N.Z.N.A.	New Zealand Nurses' Association (N.Z.N.A. File, Alexander Turnbull Library)
R.B.N.A.	Royal British Nurses' Association
SANS	School of Advanced Nursing Studies. The title given to the Wellington Post-Graduate Course in the 1970's
U.O.A.	University of Otago Archives, Hocken Library

PREFACE

In New Zealand the process of separating nursing training from the control of the hospital boards began only in 1973. In that year two pilot programmes for nurse training were commenced in polytechnics under the auspices of the Department of Education. In the same year, two universities introduced nursing studies into their curricula. Contemporary arguments underlying these events concentrated on 'dropout' rates of nurses from hospital training schemes, cost-effectiveness and contemporary attitudes of society regarding nursing education. While the more recent years of change in nurse training have been recorded there is little New Zealand research on the early history of nursing education in New Zealand. Beryl Hughes in her article 'Nursing Education : The Collapse of the Diploma of Nursing at the University of Otago, 1925-1926', provides one of the few indepth records of an important event in New Zealand nursing history. Objects and Outcomes (1983) a production of the New Zealand Nurses' Association presents an overview of the Nurses' Associations role in the development of nursing education 1909 to 1983. This thesis was written with the purpose of adding to the knowledge of events which occurred in the history of nursing education in New Zealand. The years of 1883 to 1930 were selected for study as this was the period when formal nurse training occurred, developed and was consolidated along apprenticeship lines. The events of Nurses' Registration (1901) and University education for nurses (1925-1926) occurred during these years.

Identification of the Research Problem and development of a Working Hypothesis: One of the major processes in historical research is the careful identification and articulation of the purpose of the study. Care must be taken to limit the period, problem and population.¹ Although the researcher in history initially commences with a working hypothesis new hypotheses occur as

1 David J. Fox, Fundamentals of Research in Nursing (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1976), 29.

research data increases.² For this thesis the broad research question was 'What were the social and cultural influences which directed nurse training in New Zealand between 1883 and 1930?' The research focused on a process which, by its very nature, involved the consideration of certain key concepts: women's role; nurses as women; the work life of the nurses within New Zealand society. This broad research problem was steadily refined until it became more clearly directed towards examining the influence of the Nightingale ethos and its effect on nurse training. The working hypothesis was 'that the Nightingale ethos was incompatible with advanced training for nurses'.

Definitions and Boundaries: Apart from a few exceptions this thesis is limited to the training and practice of nurses in New Zealand public hospitals during the period 1883 to 1930. It focuses on general nurse training excluding maternity, midwifery and psychiatric training.

'Nursing service' is a term used to describe nursing practices in public hospitals.

'Probationer' is used to describe a nurse receiving training. Although pupil nurse was the term used on official documents, probationer was used in correspondence and publications.

The term 'Nightingale ethos' is specifically used to define fundamental values that distinguished the nurse from other groups. It relates to a range of attitudes and beliefs which were collectively integrated into the training of nurses. These attitudes included endurance, forbearance, quietness, gentleness, patience and obedience. It is not the case that these attitudes were written and incorporated into the formal syllabus for nurse training, rather, they were manifested by diverse nursing activities and practices within the work-life of the probationer who was the major provider of nursing services in hospitals.

While this study focuses on the 'Nightingale ethos' and its ability

² Sydney D. Krampitz, ed. Readings for Nursing Research (St. Louis: Mosby, 1981), Chapter 7.

to direct nurse training, it also is concerned with the absorption into nurses' belief systems the social belief that nursing was women's work and, therefore, by their nursing practices and training nurses confirmed societies expectations of what women's work was. Hegemony³ is a term used to explain how dominant beliefs, values and practices are produced and permeate throughout society positing certain ideas and routines as natural and universal. Hegemony acted to impose specific values and meanings to nurses' practices and training, and in return nurses reflected these values in their training and practice.

Collection, organisation and analysis of data: The source material included in this thesis was diverse. Primary source material included letters, documents, records and books recording the events in this period of nursing history. The search for primary material was extensive as, apart from documented resources for the period 1925-1927 (Hughes, 1978) and Minutes of the Trained Nurses Association, little further primary source material was documented. This fact is the reason for extensive footnotes. It is hoped that these may in the future be used by others to record events in nursing history. Kai Tiaki (The New Zealand Nursing Journal) was central in helping to focus the search for other sources of evidence. The journal was the only publication for New Zealand nurses, 1908 to 1930.

The Hester Maclean miscellaneous box was deposited at the National Archives in August 1984. Primary material on this prominent nurse was not located up to this time.

The Health Department File giving information on Grace Neill has previously been documented (Tennant 1978). Fire has evidently destroyed other material on Grace Neill.

The task of tracing the immigration to New Zealand of 'Nightingale Nurses' was as exacting as it was exciting. Numerous immigration lists were examined in trying to identify 'nurses' who came to this country. This specific area could be the topic for further research.

³ Henry Giroux, "Beyond the Correspondence Theory: Notes on the Dynamics of Educational Reproduction and Transformation" Curriculum Inquiry 10:3 (1980), 242.

Alexander Turnbull Library contains material on The New Zealand Nurses' Association and is a most valuable source of data. During December 1984 oral histories of New Zealand nurses were deposited at this library. Because they were not, at this time, re-recorded onto user tapes it was not possible to use these for this thesis. Hocken library with its collection of archival material for the period 1925-27 was used extensively.

Much of the material on the actual practices and activities of nurses during the period 1883 to 1930 is an amalgamation of archival material gathered from Health files (National Archives), and Kai Tiaki. A complete set of Kai Tiaki journals is held by Palmerston North Hospital School of Nursing.

Minutes of the Otago Hospital Board were made available through Mr Jemmings, Executive Officer, Administration, Dunedin Hospital Board. Palmerston North Hospital Board Minutes were made available through the Chief Executive, Mr G. Gordon. Access to the Palmerston North Hospital Board, Sisters Monthly Report, was through the Chief Nurse, Palmerston North Hospital Board. Minutes of the Otago Branch of the Trained Nurses Association was obtained through the kindness of Ngaire Quennell, the secretary of this Branch, 1984.

Personal interviews were highlights of the data collection. No structured interview technique was used. The free form style of interview yielded valuable information which both expanded and reinforced written data.

Research Accountability: The necessity for maintaining a critical evaluation of the credibility of the recorded events has been an important part in documenting this research. The accuracy and consistency of documents were continually reviewed and, where possible, cross-referencing was sought to confirm the validity of the events. In an effort to reduce researcher bias three approaches were used:

- a. Statements made by the actors of the events were used to a considerable extent throughout the account.
- b. The development of a research problem directed the search for data.
- c. The hypothesis that the Nightingale ethos was incompatible with advanced training for nurses assisted in maintaining objectivity during the writing of the account.

Acknowledgements:

Beryl Hughes' article on nursing education provided the impetus for this study.

Nancy Tomes' article "The Silent Battle : Nurse Registration in New York State, 1903-1920", assisted in the consolidation of ideas for Chapter 2 of this thesis.

That this research has been able to benefit from a diverse source of material is owing to the interest and assistance of many people. My sincere thanks for the assistance of librarians and archivists of the Hocken Library, Turnbull Library, National Archives, Massey University Library, Palmerston North Hospital Medical Library, Nurses' Association Library, Department of Health Library, Wellington, and Palmerston North Library who went to considerable trouble to obtain elusive material.

The assistance I received from Mr T.H. Wilton, Miss X. and Miss Y. in recalling the events of their early years is very much appreciated.

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